

# **Take A Closer Look At *School-Based Business Enterprises And Business-Sponsored Student Projects***

## **What Is A School-Based Business Venture Or Project?**

A school-based business is an actual enterprise, not a simulation, which is striving for economic viability and is operated by students. It acts as an incubator, providing students with entrepreneurial, professional/technical and academic instruction. These enterprises create or strengthen the connection between classroom learning and work-based learning. Businesses usually sponsor the enterprise and advise students and/or supervise student staff. Examples of school-based businesses include restaurants and catering enterprises, student stores, farms and greenhouses, computer repair and training businesses, craft-based enterprises selling T-shirts or jewelry, and student banks.

A similar activity is business-sponsored *student projects*, where groups of students work with employers to produce a product such as a video documentary or a computer-based information kiosk. Another example is at David Douglas High School, where Century West Engineering helped students build a working electric car.

## **What Is The Purpose Of A Business-Sponsored Enterprise Or Project?**

These activities help students:

- Gain awareness of the academic, technical and personal skills required in specific jobs
- Gain self-esteem by working with adult role models and performing real work
- Begin to understand the culture of a workplace and how to interact with co-workers and supervisors
- Learn transferable skills such as market research, accounting, sales, customer service, and quality control
- Understand the connection between school, work and achieving goals

## **What Is The Employer's Role?**

Employers work with students and school staff to design a business plan or project, then help supervise students. Often, they also donate equipment and supplies to get them started. School-based businesses can be particularly beneficial to rural schools or schools in areas with a limited range of employers.

Sponsoring businesses can assist with student enterprises different from their own focus. For example, an accounting firm could provide support for bookkeeping functions in any kind of student business.

### ***School-Based Business And Student Project Checklist***

- Be available to work with students and teachers to design a business or project plan
- Sign an agreement outlining the roles and responsibilities of employers, schools and students
- Work with teachers to integrate student's work-based learning with classroom learning
- If the students project takes place at your work site, review relevant company health and safety rules, and provide any necessary safety gear
- If asked, complete an evaluation of your participation

### ***During Business/Project Operation***

- Provide ongoing instruction and supervision; demonstrate high expectations
- Help students learn team-work and other skills by sharing information on careers, work life and connections to further education
- Provide feedback on good and bad performance by pulling students aside, providing honest but nonjudgmental comments

### **A School-Based Business Success Story**

Wells Fargo & Co., the ninth largest bank holding company in the United States, has worked with a number of schools to help set up student banks. Branch Manager Tom Redmond, who has worked with David Douglas and Sam Barlow high schools, says, "We get involved because these schools are part of our community, and students are the consumers and business leaders of tomorrow. When I was in high school, we went out for one day a year to visit a local business, and that was it. On-the-job experience is definitely better."

Kim Calcagno, a marketing teacher at Sam Barlow, explains the appeal for student workers and student customers at the bank. "Even though we can't technically call ourselves a branch, this is a real bank. Students have a Wells Fargo account registered through the branch at 242<sup>nd</sup> and Burnside, and they can use their access card to withdraw money from cash machines. This has made it very credible with the students." Students working in the school-based bank learn from experience and process things the same way that the branch does, following rules for identification, and so on. The bank is open before school and during lunch. Currently, there are about 130 active accounts. A number of students have used their experience as a stepping stone to paid employment at Wells Fargo.

### **A Business-Sponsored Project Success Story**

Century West Engineering, a full service environmental and engineering consulting firm for private, state, federal and municipal clients for over 25 years, has helped sponsor student projects at David Douglas High School. By donating staff expertise, funds and supplies, Century West, Boeing of Portland and Brattain International helped students build a working electric car and participate in state competition. This year, students are working on a light rail project called the *David Douglas Express* which will travel between buildings on-campus. Students are still in the design phase of the project.

Tim Terich, a Century West Engineering structural design engineer, helps students take their initial design ideas from sketches to working drawings, on through to production. "We contribute to the overall engineering, to help them go from brainstorming to real life. We give them insights on the economics of the project and how to do it cheaply and efficiently. The kids are really good—they do the

Employer volunteers travel to the school to work with students, and some parts of fabrication take place at the sponsoring businesses. Mr. Terich says, "The students generally pick one or two seniors and give them job titles like marketing coordinator and CAD manager, and they call me for help with problems. Business sponsors donate a lot of the materials and funds used to build the projects."

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